

Principles to practice in overcoming the spirit of offense

by Danny Lurette

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Proverbs 18:19 "An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars."

Let me ask a simple question: "Is it possible for a single individual to take down the walls of a strong city?"

Of course not.

Notice that in this passage of Scripture, we see that your chances of taking a city with strong walls is much better than winning back the friendship, loyalty and love of someone you've offended.

We often warn against "becoming" offended; we rarely speak of the results of offending "others". The results are devastating! In 99% of cases, while offended individuals can overcome offense, there will almost always be a division of friendship.

Think for a moment of someone in your past who you once enjoyed great fellowship with but through offense one of you became bitter. In 99% of cases, you're no longer in fellowship with that individual...right? You may be around them; you may even attend the same church... but the closeness and sweetness of that fellowship is broken through offense.

Now notice the second part of the verse: "Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars."

Conflict isn't always bad; it can actually be very beneficial. Yet, when a conflict becomes an argument... a separation of friendship and fellowship occurs that will be very difficult to overcome. Arguments are like gates that separate people one from another.

The good news? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, restoration of friendship and fellowship with someone you or I have offended "is" possible! We know that through the power of God, 10,000 will fall by our right side and 10,000 by our left... but nothing can touch us if we seek God's forgiveness and humble ourselves before those whom we've offended.

We've all offended someone at some point; yet very few who profess to know the Lord actually take time to make it right. We have a tendency to move on and "forget about it", believing that God is somehow on "our" side and "against them".

Things that can offend others are things we must lay aside. Things such as gossip (sharing truthful information about others outside of their presence), telling "white lies", sarcasm meant to tear another person down in the form of a

"joke" ... on and on the list goes. These types of behaviors cause others to become offended... even if we didn't intend it.

Personally speaking, I've always struggled with offense; it's certainly not hard for me to hold a grudge! Perhaps you struggle in the same area.. perhaps not. Regardless, we all struggle with 'something' and God is working in all of us. Amen?

I asked the Lord to put a watch on my heart and my mouth; to convict me immediately if I sense any offense coming into my mind. Has it been easy? No! Have I gained the victory over being offended? Absolutely! I feel no need to hold a grudge against anyone and the moment that the devil tempts me to ... I walk away and stay away, trusting God to deal with the individual.

Now, this doesn't mean we allow others to harm us purposely. If we're being mistreated, talked about, lied about, torn down by words masked as "jokes"... we're to remove ourselves from such people and give no reason why.

If, on the other hand, we were the cause of offending someone and we "know" we've offended them, we're not to wait until they come to us; we're to go to them and seek their forgiveness. It may be difficult and it will certainly take much humbling of oneself but our hands will be clean and our hearts made pure by the compassion and mercy we show to those we've wronged by our attitudes, actions and/or words.

Today, I want to encourage you, if you've offended anyone, to make it right with them. Don't wait another moment! If you've been offended, I want to encourage you to forgive quickly and hold nothing against them. If they're continuing to do things to offend, remove yourself from their presence but with the view that they're victims of sin... and not monsters. Love them anyway!

Offense... it'll come to all of us in one form or another... but we can overcome by the simple principle of unconditional forgiveness.